

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS,  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
(Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Building No. 2)  
(Veterans Administration Hospital, Jefferson Barracks)  
(Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks  
Division, Education)  
VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division  
1 Jefferson Barracks Drive  
Saint Louis  
St. Louis City  
Missouri

HABS MO-1943-B  
*MO-1943-B*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS,  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING (BUILDING 2)

HABS No. MO-1943-B

**Location:** Building 2, VA Medical Center, 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive,  
St. Louis, Missouri  
USGS Quadrangle Oakville, Missouri  
UTM Coordinates 16 7258762 E 9966068N

**Date of Construction:** 1922-1923

**Designer** Treasury Department Supervising Architect's Office

**Contractor** James Stewart and Company

**Present Owner:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

**Present Use:** Education Building

**Significance:** The Administration Building was part of the early 1920s effort to build modern hospitals for U.S. military veterans. The building continued to serve as an administrative facility at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, from the 1920s through the 1990s. The building is now used as an educational facility by the hospital.

**Project Information:** This project was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as mitigation for the demolition of buildings at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, a property that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places via consensus determination of eligibility between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office.

**Description:**

The Administration Building (Building 2) is a three-story stucco-clad facility with a hipped roof and a raised basement. The building is thirteen bays wide and three bays deep. The structure of the Administration Building is composed of a reinforced-concrete frame with concrete posts, beams, and floors. Wall space in between the reinforced-concrete posts is filled in with brick and terra-cotta block. The building has a fairly plain exterior and little architectural detail. The interior of the Administration Building is now used for educational purposes and has been completely remodeled; no aspects of the original floor plan or interior finishes were observed inside the building. The building faces a large asphalt parking lot, with the former Nurses' Quarters (Building 3) located on the opposite side of the lot.

The exterior of the Administration Building is clad in stucco throughout, with the current stucco surface dating to the 1990s. All windows are aluminum replacements dating to the last twenty years; the new windows do not replicate the light pattern of the building's original windows, which were double-hung multi-light units. Major additions to the exterior include a three-sided entrance vestibule on the facade (the west wall) and two stair towers added to the east wall. The vestibule and the stair towers were added to the building during the last thirty years.

The facade, which is the building's west wall, has a symmetrical arrangement of rectangular aluminum replacement windows. The three-sided entrance vestibule is at the center of the facade and is positioned where a wood porch once stood; the porch had four wood Tuscan Doric columns and an entablature with metopes and triglyphs. The current three-sided vestibule features aluminum and glass double doors, two white pilasters, and a white cornice. Above the vestibule is a recessed arched opening that frames triple aluminum windows on the second and third floors. An arched fan motif sits above the center third-floor window and appears to be a synthetic replacement of original wood decorative trim. Above the recessed arch is a gabled pediment with a cornice and raking cornice. A fairly plain cornice and gutter mark the roofline on either side of the gable. The hipped roof was originally covered in slate shingles but now has asphalt shingle cladding. The hipped roof also features four arched dormers, each of which has a one-over-one replacement window.

The north and south walls of the building are plain with stucco cladding, rectangular double-hung metal replacement windows, and plain cornices and gutters at the roofline. The rear (east) wall is also plain with stucco cladding, replacement double-hung windows, and a plain white cornice and gutter. The east wall has two non-original stair towers, and each tower has a flat metal door, double-hung replacement windows, and a gabled roof.

The entire interior of the Administration Building has been remodeled repeatedly and has no traces of the original interior layout or finishes. The current interior, which dates to the 1990s, has an open central staircase and a series of corridors leading to offices and other administrative facilities. The interior finishes consist of materials like gypsum board, carpeting, acoustical tile ceilings, and recessed fluorescent lighting.

### **History:**

The U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, was part of an early 1920s plan to reform health care for veterans. Before the early 1920s, health care for veterans had in many cases been dispensed from improvised facilities that were in poor condition and not well suited for the task. After a well-publicized tour of some of these hospitals, the U.S. Veterans Bureau began planning and construction on new, modern hospitals throughout the United States. Planning for the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, including drafting of construction drawings for the Administration Building (Building 2), took place in 1922. Construction on the hospital complex began in 1922, and the buildings were completed in 1923.

The design of the Administration Building reflects Neoclassical Revival influence. The early twentieth century had seen a revival of Italian Renaissance and English Palladian architectural design, as well as other forms of European Classical design. In addition, the era of the 1920s was the beginning of a period in which interest in American Colonial architectural forms also reached a climax. Both architectural movements spawned an interest in symmetrical form and Classically inspired ornament. Features such as Classical columns and pediments were used heavily, and the ornamentation on buildings was in many cases restrained compared to the more lavish ornamentation on late nineteenth-century buildings.

As it existed originally, the Administration Building would have had a Neoclassical Revival exterior design. The building had a symmetrical composition centered on a central gabled pavilion with a small porch and an arched-window arrangement. The building also had a hipped roof with a symmetrical arrangement of arched dormers. The original decoration of the building included the central porch, which had wood Tuscan Doric columns, an entablature with metopes and triglyphs, and a cornice. The group of windows in the gabled central bay was framed inside a large arched recess, and the center window on the third floor was capped with an arched wood fan motif. The windows were multi-light wood sash, most commonly with a six-over-six arrangement. The exterior was ornamental, but this ornament was used sparingly.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office, *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Administration Building*, 1922, on file at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Plans for most of the 1920s Veterans Bureau hospital buildings were standardized, but the architectural style was varied depending on the location of the hospital. Styles like Spanish Revival might be used at hospitals in the southwestern United States, while Neoclassical and Colonial Revival decoration was more commonly used in the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, New England, and the Midwest.<sup>2</sup> Drawings for the Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, including the Main Hospital drawings, bear the title block of the Veterans Bureau, and thus were designed in-house by federal government architects rather than by a private architectural firm.

Construction drawings for the Administration Building indicate that the Department of the Treasury's Office of the Supervising Architect designed this building and other buildings at the hospital built in 1922-1923. James Wetmore is listed on the 1922 cornerstone of the Main Hospital (Building 1) as the Acting Supervising Architect for the hospital complex, although this inscription is somewhat misleading. From 1915 to 1933, Wetmore was head of the Office of the Supervising Architect, a wing of the Treasury Department that was often in charge of designing federal facilities such as courthouses and post offices. However, Wetmore was primarily a lawyer and government administrator and should not be credited with the design of the Main Hospital and other buildings at the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks.<sup>3</sup> These buildings would have been designed by staff architects of the Office of the Supervising Architect. Warren G. Noll, foreman draftsman for the Office of the Supervising Architect, appears to have been in charge of the Jefferson Barracks Veterans Bureau project and signed most of the construction drawings.

During Wetmore's tenure as head of the supervising architect's office, he worked closely with William McAdoo, the Secretary of the Treasury, to develop standard plans for federal buildings. The Administration Building at the Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital is a product of this standardization movement. Highly visible buildings that accommodated high-revenue facilities in large cities were given a greater level of architectural detail, while buildings on less prominent sites in small communities were more plain. Since the hospital was in a remote site, the buildings have a more basic design than that of a main federal building, like a post office, in a large city. Although the design for the Administration Building was standardized, individual plan sets were developed for the building. The supervising architect's office recognized that each building site was unique and developed individual plan sets based on the standard designs for every building they were responsible for. The use of standardized plans cut down on costs and sped up construction time.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gjore J. Mollenhoff, Karen R. Tupek, and Sandra Webb, "Veterans Administration Medical Center, Hartford, Vermont," in *Connecticut River Joint Commissions: National Register Properties*, <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V11-21.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 220, 215, 222-223.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 220, 215, 222-223.

Drawings for the Administration Building were drafted in May 1922. The floor plans were updated during the 1940s and 1950s to reflect changing uses of the interior spaces, so it is difficult to know the specific purpose of some of the original interior spaces. The first floor had a series of administrative work areas and office spaces, including the hospital's payroll division. Functions for two of the largest administrative workspaces were changed later, so the original functions of these spaces is not clear from the floor plan. The second floor had offices for the hospital's vocational director, manager, personnel director, assistant personnel director, and a secretary. The third floor featured the engineering office, drafting room, and a plastic eye clinic. The third floor also had administrative space for the hospital's supply office, including a large work area, and separate offices for the supply officer and assistant supply officer. The basement of the Administration Building contained classrooms, an area for forms control, and offices for an American Legion representative and for the hospital's construction superintendent<sup>5</sup>

The Administration Building continued to be used for its original purpose through the 1940s and 1950s. By 1952, the two largest spaces on the first floor were taken up by the social services and finance offices. The second floor was still occupied mostly by offices of high-ranking hospital officials, and the third floor still contained drafting and engineering offices and the eye clinic.<sup>6</sup>

Windows throughout the building were replaced in 1982.<sup>7</sup> By 1990, the function of the Administration Building was still listed on VA facilities lists as an administrative and educational building.<sup>8</sup> During the 1990s, the building was completely gutted and rebuilt on the interior. The exterior was re-surfaced in a new synthetic stucco material, and the original porch was removed in favor of a large three-sided stucco-clad entrance vestibule. The building is today used as the education facility for the medical center. The interior does not retain any original finishes or any aspects of the original floor plan.

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<sup>5</sup> Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office, *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Administration Building*, Washington, D.C., 1922, on file at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Veterans Administration, Construction drawing files for Building 2, 1922-2010, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

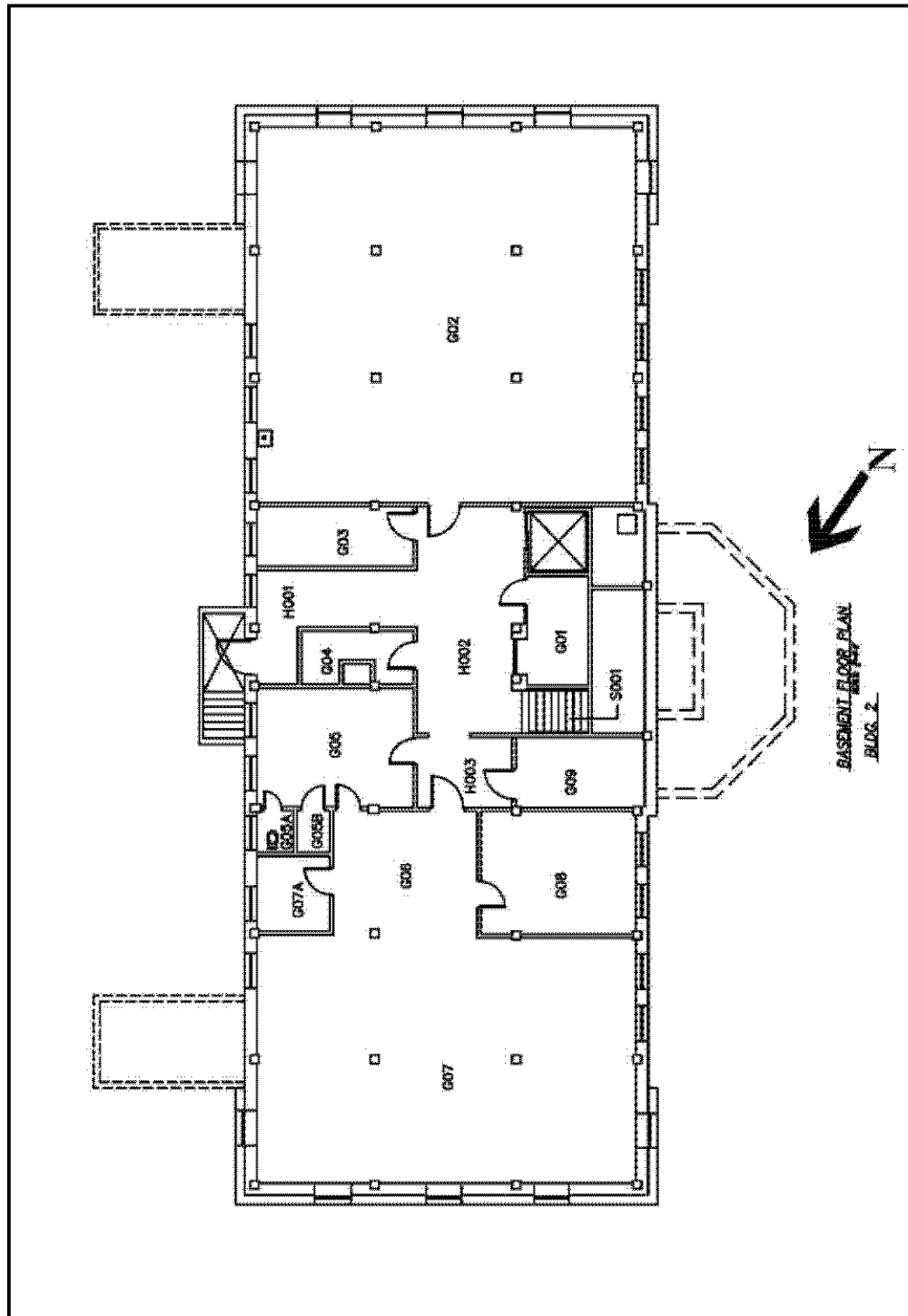
<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Annual Real Property Survey Report, Building Numbers and Locations, Jefferson Barracks VAMC*, 1990, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

**Sources:**

- Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office. *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Administration Building*. 1922. On file at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.
- Lee, Antoinette J. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2000.
- Mollenhoff, Gjore J., Karen R. Tupek, and Sandra Webb. "Veterans Administration Medical Center, Hartford, Vermont" in *Connecticut River Joint Commissions: National Register Properties*. <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V11-21.htm> (accessed May 7, 2010).
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. *Annual Real Property Survey Report, Building Numbers and Locations, Jefferson Barracks VAMC*. 1990. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.
- . Construction drawing files for Building 2, St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, 1922-2010. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

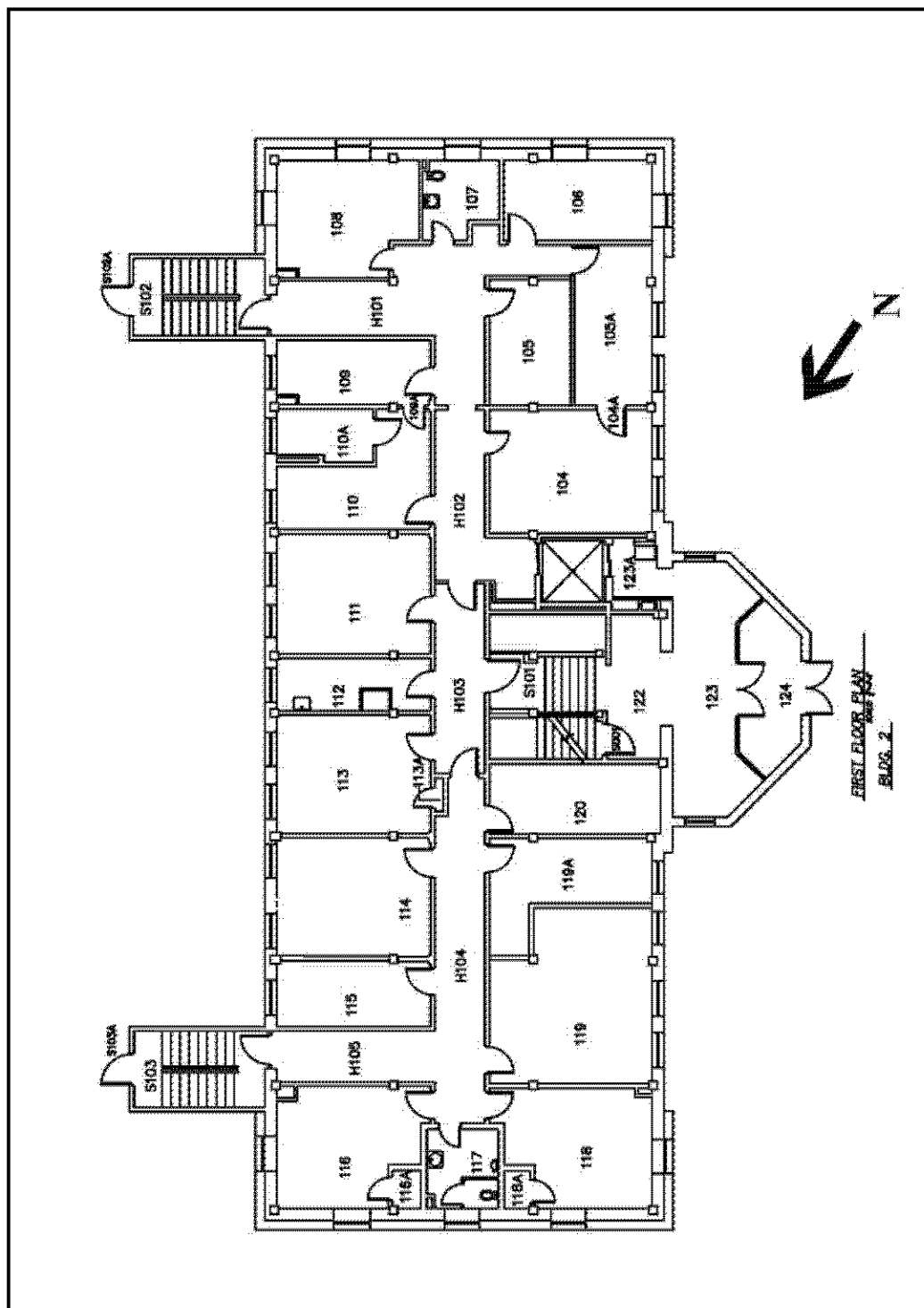
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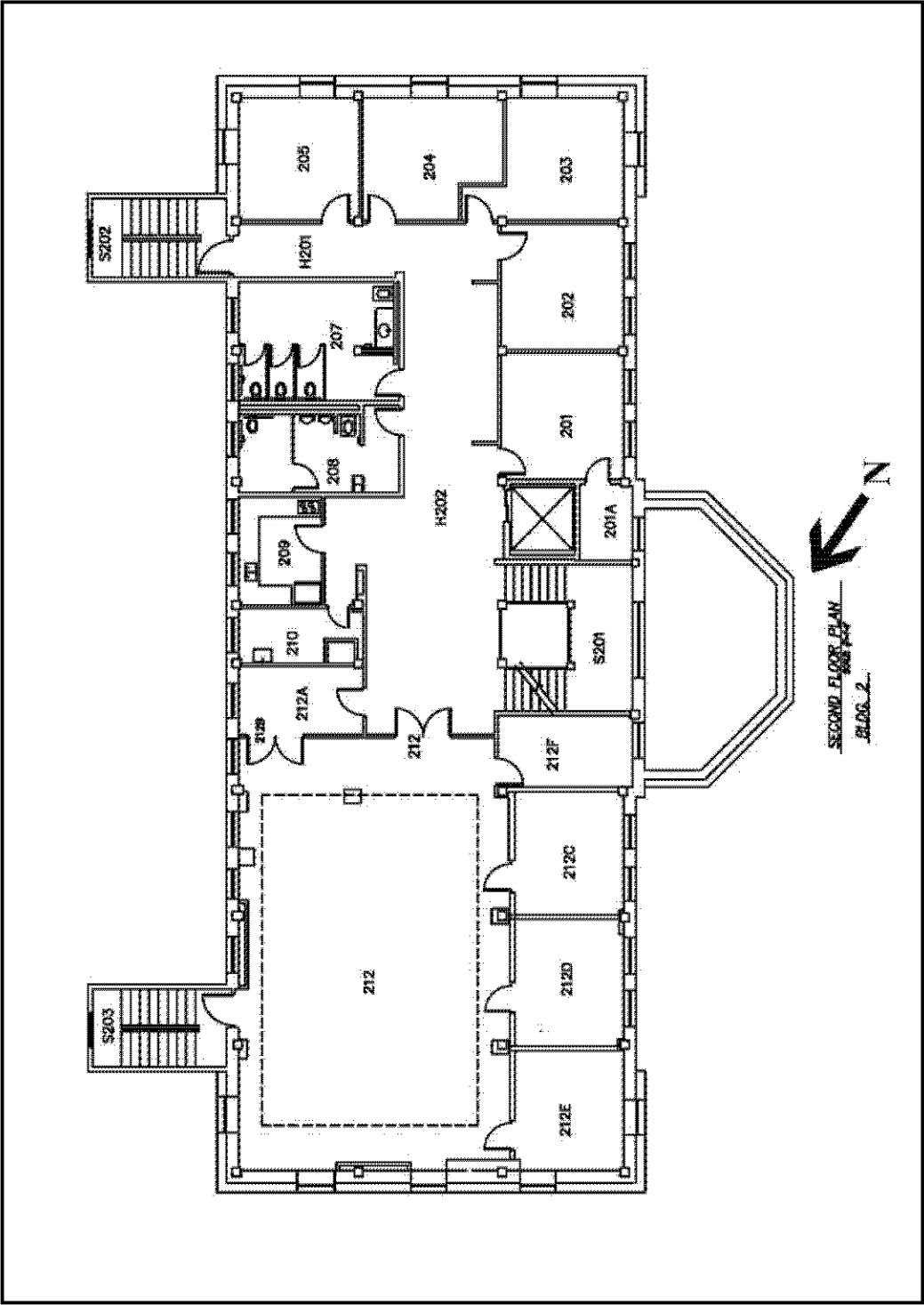


Administration Building (Building 2), current basement floor plan

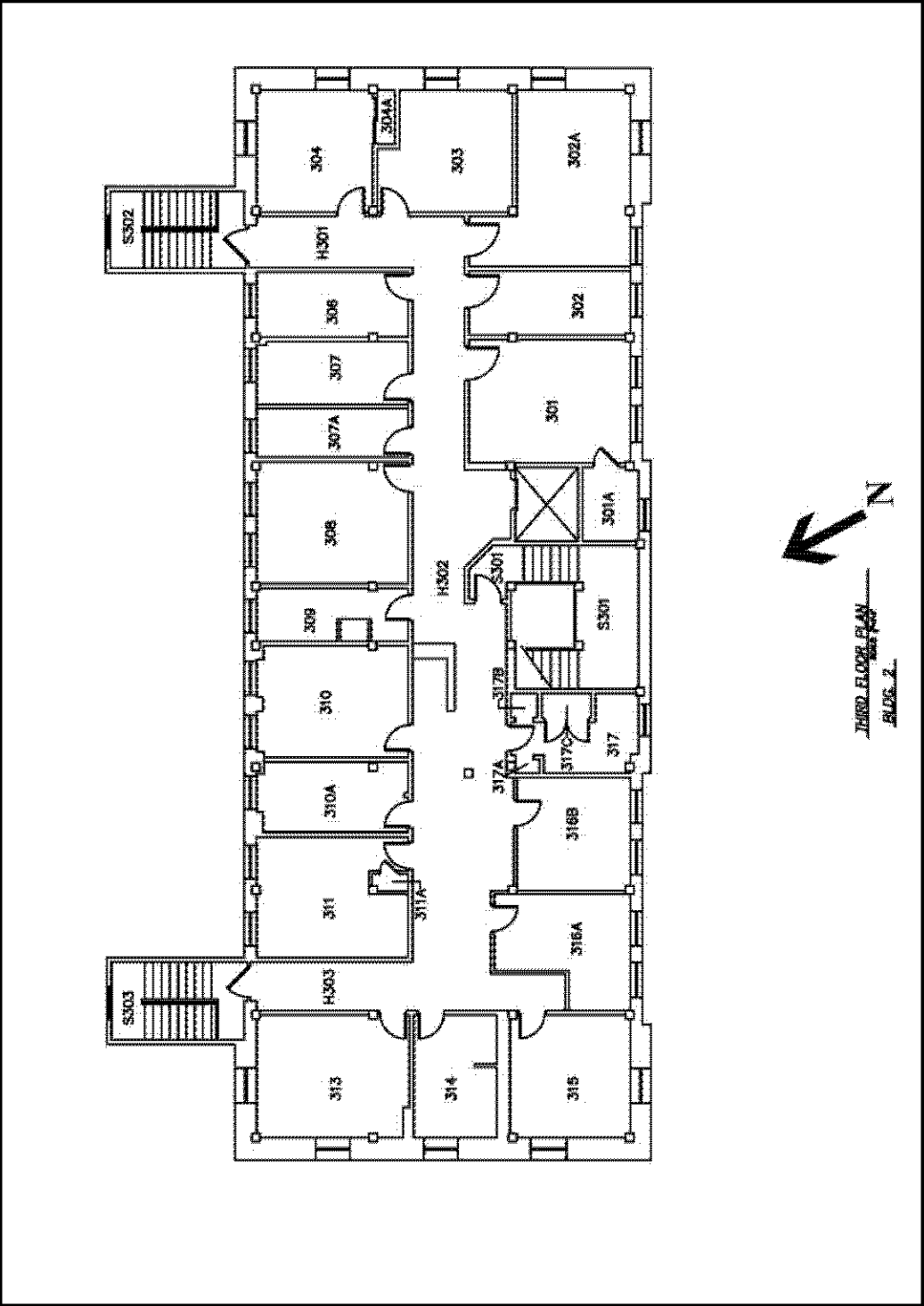




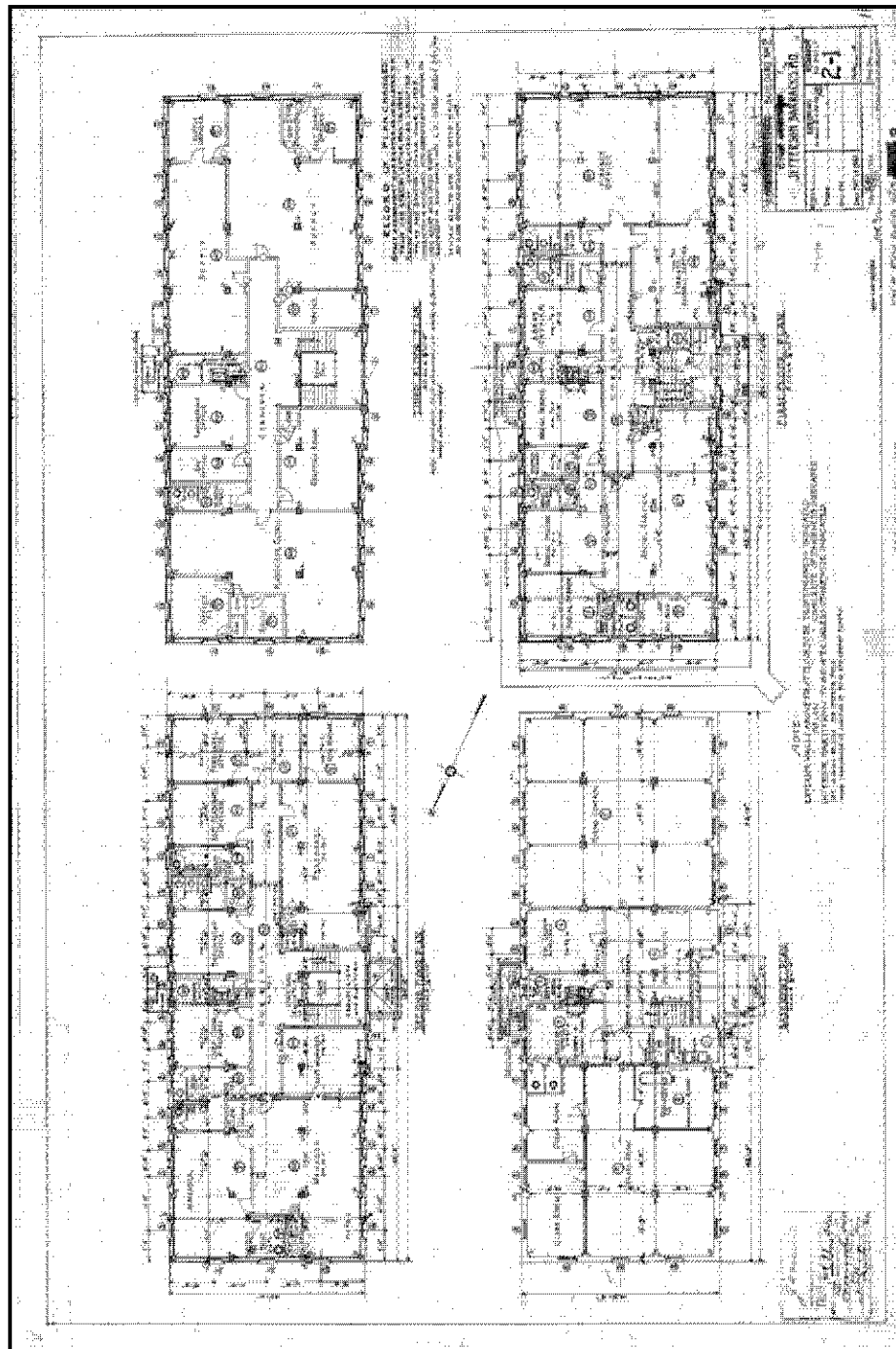
Administration Building (Building 2), current first-floor plan



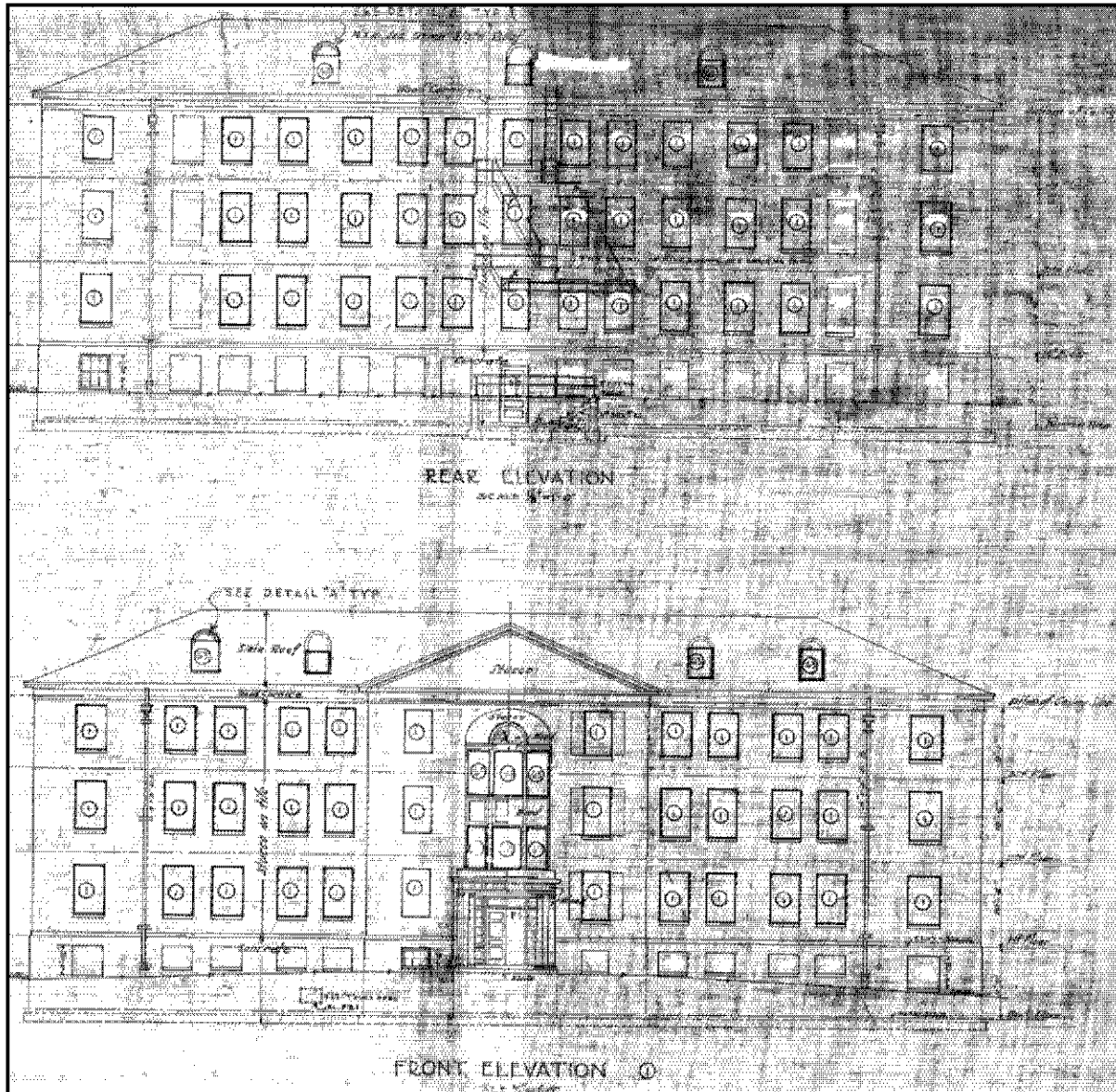
Administration Building (Building 2), current second-floor plan



Administration Building (Building 2), current third-floor plan



Original floor plans for the Administration Building (Building 2), 1922  
Some room functions on this sheet were updated by the VA in the 1940s and 1950s



Original front and rear elevations for the Administration Building (Building 2), 1922

Drawing was altered by the VA during a 1980s window-replacement project